



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Monday, February 26, 2024**

HB 5201, An Act Concerning The Use Of Funds In The Tobacco Settlement Fund

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5201, An Act Concerning The Use Of Funds In The Tobacco Settlement Fund**. CHA supports this bill.

Connecticut hospitals are critical to their communities. They are confronting the challenges posed by a post-pandemic healthcare system with an exemplary healthcare workforce that continues to provide outstanding care. But challenges remain. Hospitals are treating sicker patients, it continues to be challenging to hire and retain staff, and the financial headwinds are grave. Through it all, hospitals are steadfast, providing high-quality 24-hour care for everyone who walks through their doors, focusing on making Connecticut's healthcare system more equitable, and driving world-class innovation right here in Connecticut.

HB 5201 would require annual funding of the state's tobacco control programs at the minimum amount recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), currently at \$22.7 million.

CHA supports strong tobacco control measures, whether through municipal ordinances, workplace policies, or state and federal laws. On a daily basis, caregivers in Connecticut hospitals see firsthand the impact of tobacco-related disease and illness and, because of this, CHA wholeheartedly endorses common sense public policy initiatives that seek to prevent and mitigate the harmful effects of tobacco use, such as the funding recommendations in HB 5201.

The best way to reduce health-associated harm caused by smoking is to abstain from smoking altogether or, at a minimum, delay the start of smoking. For far too long, Connecticut has not adequately funded and at times has not funded programs focused on tobacco use prevention and reduction. Increased funding as proposed in HB 5201 for tobacco control and prevention would go a long way in ensuring programs and services are provided in communities throughout the state.

CHA believes increased funding for tobacco control programs to prevent and reduce tobacco use is a logical step in the state's tobacco control initiatives, following the passage of T-21 and the reestablishment of the state's Tobacco Trust Fund. CHA looks forward to working with members of this Committee in securing passage of this important public health policy initiative.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.